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President: Mr. Kerim ..... (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 21

Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba

Report of the Secretary-General (A/62/92 and A/62/92/Add.1)

Draft resolution (A/62/L.1)

Mr. Amil (Pakistan): I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of 77 and China under the agenda item entitled, "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba".

The heads of State and Government of the Group of 77 and China at the second South Summit, held in Qatar in June 2005, condemned the use of economic coercive measures designed to prevent countries from exercising their right to decide their own political, economic and social systems and called on all countries not to recognize unilateral extraterritorial laws that impose sanctions on other States and foreign companies. The heads of State and Government also recognized that the embargo had caused a high degree of economic and financial damage and had negatively impacted on the welfare and well-being of the people of Cuba. They called upon the Government of the United States to put an end to the embargo.

More recently, at the thirty-first Annual Ministerial Meeting of the Group of 77 and China, held in New York on 27 September 2007, the Ministers once again firmly rejected the imposition of laws and regulations with extraterritorial impact and all other forms of coercive economic measures, including unilateral sanctions against developing countries. The ministers reiterated the urgent need to eliminate them immediately. They emphasized that such actions not only undermine the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and international law, but also severely threaten the freedom of trade and investment. They therefore called on the international community to neither recognize those measures nor apply them. The G-77 and China stands firm in rejecting unilateral measures as a means of exerting pressure on developing countries.

The G-77 and China is committed to working towards a better world for all in which nations large or small can coexist peacefully. The achievement of such peaceful coexistence among nations requires an adherence by all nations to the rule of law, including international law.

In conformity with the fundamental norms of international law, international humanitarian law, the Charter of the United Nations and the norms and principles governing peaceful relations among States, the G-77 and China supports the need to eliminate coercive economic measures as a means of political and economic coercion.

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The Group of 77 and China believes that the continued imposition of an economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba violates the principles of the sovereign equality of States and of non-intervention and non-interference in other States' domestic affairs, as well as international humanitarian law, the Charter of the United Nations and the norms and principles governing peaceful relations among States.

We believe that the replacement of the embargo with greater dialogue and cooperation will contribute greatly not only towards the removal of tensions, but also towards promoting meaningful exchange and partnership between countries whose destinies are linked by history and geography.

Considering the impact that the embargo has had on the everyday life of the Cuban people, the overwhelming majority of Member States are here today in support of the resolution on the necessity of ending the embargo. The G-77 and China will again support the draft resolution (A/62/L.1) before us today and would urge all Member States to do so as well.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt): I have the honour to speak regarding agenda item 21 on behalf of the 118 United Nations Member States that are members of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

The Movement renews its commitment to defend, preserve and promote the Charter of the United Nations and international law. We oppose unilateralism and unilaterally imposed measures by States in violation of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. NAM rejects the adoption and implementation of extraterritorial or unilateral coercive measures or legislation, including unilateral economic sanctions, other intimidating measures and arbitrary travel restrictions, that seek to exert pressure on non-aligned countries; threaten their sovereignty, independence and freedom of trade and investment; and prevent them from exercising their right to decide, of their own free will, their own political, economic and social systems.

Those measures, laws and regulations constitute flagrant violations of the Charter of the United Nations, international law, the multilateral trading system and the norms and principles governing friendly relations among States. In this context, we are committed to persevere with effective efforts to reverse them and urge other States to do likewise, as called for by the General Assembly and other United Nations organs. NAM requests that States applying those measures or laws revoke them fully and immediately.

As reaffirmed by the heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Movement at their Summit Conference held in Havana in September 2006, we call once again upon the Government of the United States of America to put an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba, which, in addition to being unilateral and contrary to the Charter of the United Nations, international law and the principle of good neighbourliness, is causing huge material losses and economic damage to the people of Cuba.

NAM reiterates its deep concern over the widening of the extraterritorial nature of the embargo against Cuba and rejects the reinforcement of the measures adopted by the United States Government aimed at tightening the embargo, as well as all other recent measures carried out by the Government of the United States against the people of Cuba.

In conclusion, the Non-Aligned Movement again urges strict compliance with resolutions 47/19, 48/16, 49/9, 50/10, 51/17, 52/10, 53/4, 54/21, 55/20, 56/9, 57/11, 58/7, 59/11, 60/12 and 61/11 of the United Nations General Assembly, all related to the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba.

The President: Before giving the floor to the next speaker, I would like to propose that the list of speakers in the debate on this item be now closed.

It was so decided.

Ms. Bethel (Bahamas): I have the honour to address the General Assembly on behalf of the member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), namely Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, St. Kitzenibez, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago and my own country, the Bahamas.

Let me begin by stating that CARICOM aligns itself with the statement made by Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The situation affecting the Caribbean member State of Cuba continues to be of significant concern to the Caribbean Community in the context of

nporary international relations. CARICOM has s recognized the importance of productive and lly beneficial relations among the countries of der Caribbean, whose shores are washed by the ean Sea and which must face the challenges to ization from a unified perspective. Thus Cuba, as r Caribbean State, faces certain obstacles that ue to be of great concern to our wider region. At cond meeting of CARICOM-Cuba on 29 May in incent and the Grenadines, the Ministers for n Affairs, in the communiqué issuing therefrom, ted:

'their firm commitment to the purpose and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, multilateralism and the fundamental principles of international law, including respect for sovereignty and the juridical equality of States, and non-interference in the internal affairs of States, the prohibition of threats or the use of force in international relations, respect for territorial integrity, the peaceful resolution of disputes and the sovereign rights of the citizens of every country to freely determine its system and political institutions in conditions of peace, stability and justice."

principles continue to constitute core elements conduct of CARICOM international relations.

In that regard, we read with great interest the of the Secretary-General, which outlines the responses from an overwhelming majority of er States, who also share and uphold those ples as they relate to the unilateral embargo st Cuba. CARICOM reiterates its complete ition to the punitive embargo, which has gone on r too long. We maintain our opposition to the ition of extraterritorial laws on third States, is contrary to the Charter and has no place in mporary international relations.

The significant impact of the embargo on the n economy continues to be of great concern to COM, and the humanitarian impact on the people ba, especially in the area of health care and food, eed saddening. The inability of Cuba to acquire al equipment, spare parts and latest-generation ations because of the embargo continues to affect Cuban health-care system, where treatment heless remains free of charge to the Cuban e.

Cuba, as the most populous State of the Caribbean region, is an integral part of our pan-Caribbean process. CARICOM links with Cuba remain strong and are continually expanding. On 8 December 2006, the Chairman of the CARICOM Conference of Heads of Government, Prime Minister Denzil Douglas of Saint Kitts and Nevis, recounted the historical links between Cuba and CARICOM States on the occasion of the 34th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Cuba and CARICOM. On that day, in 1972, the four independent Caribbean States of Barbados, Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago expressed their strong commitment to the concept of the oneness of the Caribbean. Since that time, the relationship has been one of solidarity and fraternity and has become stronger and deeper through cooperation in the political, economic and social domains.

Prime Minister Douglas also expressed the deep appreciation of CARICOM for the technical and other forms of assistance that Cuba continues to provide to the Caribbean, particularly to the young people of our region as they seek to develop their professional skills and contribute to the building of our nations and, collectively, to the Caribbean community.

The Prime Minister went on to acknowledge that almost 3,000 CARICOM students are currently studying in Cuba, a large number of whom are beneficiaries of scholarships in disciplines ranging from medicine, engineering and telecommunications to architecture, computer sciences, geology and others. Cuban scholarships to the non-self-governing Territories of the Caribbean must also be recognized and applauded.

It is no small feat that Cuban assistance in the field of health throughout much of the globe continues to be considerable, even as the impact of the embargo is systematically tightened. Cuban doctors continue to serve throughout the developing world, where health-care needs are often acute and greatly underserviced. In the Caribbean alone, Cuba has built hospitals and clinics, provided medicines and furnished doctors, nurses and other health-care professionals. Cuban support for the restoration of the sight of many of our people will always be remembered with utmost appreciation and gratitude.

The meeting of CARICOM/Cuba ministers for foreign affairs last May identified additional areas of

cooperation, including the fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic, cooperation on the impact of climate change between the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre and the Cuban Institute of Meteorology, and the sustainable use of natural resources, among others. We in CARICOM are looking forward to further cooperation with Cuba on all of those matters.

Through its actions, Cuba has shown that it is an integral part of the Caribbean. It has not threatened any Member State, but rather has consistently sought to assist its neighbours in their ongoing quest for sustainable human development. CARICOM reiterates its unwavering support for the right of the Cuban people, and all people, to self-determination, as clearly stated in the Charter of the United Nations.

The embargo imposed against Cuba is an anachronism and serves no useful purpose in this twenty-first century, where our planet is faced with the formidable challenge of an impending Earth crisis as a result of climate change. While small island States in the Caribbean and Pacific provide early warning of imminent climactic disaster, large areas of the African continent are now suffering through drought on the one hand and disastrous floods on the other. Economic inequality continues to persist and worsen. We must exert all the energies of the international community to face and resolve those formidable challenges.

CARICOM enjoys friendly relations with both Cuba and the United States. Those two great nations have produced great scholars, scientists and global leaders. We call for a new beginning between the Governments and peoples of those two great nations, one large, one small. As with similar initiatives undertaken for negotiations on far more difficult issues of international relations, we can only imagine the resounding positive effect for the international community of such a rapprochement, based on the fundamental principle of the self-determination of peoples.

It is within that context that CARICOM States support the draft resolution on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba (A/62/L.1). The time has long passed for us to move on and to tackle the real challenges facing humankind.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Jorge Valero, Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Mr. Valero (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the Government of the United States of America against Cuba constitutes a genocidal and unilateral act of criminal force, which flagrantly violates the Charter of the United Nations and the norms and principles of international law.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela categorically rejects the application of laws or regulatory provisions with extraterritorial effect that violate the sovereignty of States and intervene in their internal affairs. The embargo against Cuba is an anachronism of failed imperial policies and is rejected by the overwhelming majority of the peoples and Governments of the world. The United Nations has repeatedly rejected the embargo and the forces of North American imperialism have repeatedly disregarded that appeal by the international community.

A few days ago, President George W. Bush threatened to intensify the ferocity of the embargo against Cuba, urged further isolation of that heroic brotherly country and called for the undermining of the institutions of the Cuban State. That represents a new attempt to destroy the revolution and reconquer Cuba, and it is now being implemented. The Bolivarian revolution completely rejects those irrational endeavours and urges all Governments and peoples of the world to oppose such imperial arrogance.

The inhuman measures imposed by the Government of United States of America for more than 45 years have had a terrible economic and social impact on the sister Republic of Cuba, in refusing to recognize the norms that govern economic, commercial and financial relations among States. The Government and the people of Cuba have responded with honour and dignity to this criminal aggression. Despite the embargo, Cuba maintains its cooperation and solidarity with the peoples of the South, in particular with regard to programmes in education and health care. Venezuela appreciates the solidarity of the Cuban people and of its historic leader, Commander Fidel Castro.

Venezuela firmly demands that the Government of the United States put an end to the cruel and punitive embargo against Cuba. The human rights of the Cuban people are being massively, flagrantly and

repeatedly violated by that genocidal act. The embargo against Cuba constitutes an act of aggression and hinders the necessary climate of dialogue and cooperation that must prevail among sovereign States in the spirit of the Charter of the United Nations and in line with its purposes and principles.

Allow me to recall here a quote by Cornelius Tacitus that is a perfect description of the haughtiness of today's imperialists. The great Roman philosopher and historian said: "Where they make a desert, they call it peace". Those who insult and destroy peoples and cultures in the name of freedom operate in the same manner.

This Assembly has rejected the unilateral imposition of measures by the Government of the United States against Cuba. It is high time to reiterate that determination. In this framework, our country subscribes to the statements made by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and by the representative of Uruguay on behalf of the Common Market of the South and its associated States.

Venezuela will vote in favour of draft resolution A/62/L.1 on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba.

Mr. Heller (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Government of Mexico once more expresses its rejection of the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba, and reiterates its opposition to the use of coercive measures that are not supported by the Charter of the United Nations. Mexico states that any type of political, economic or military sanctions imposed upon States can only derive from the decisions or recommendations of the Security Council or General Assembly. The Government of Mexico has maintained that position in the context of various United Nations agencies, supported by the fact that the United States embargo against Cuba is the result of a unilateral policy that has dragged on for almost half a century in contravention of international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

Mexico believes, furthermore, that such unilateral measures result in severe humanitarian consequences — in direct contradiction to the objectives that supposedly inspired those measures — and represent a rejection of diplomacy and dialogue as the ideal ways to settle disputes among States.

As stated in the report of the Secretary-General (A/62/92), various organs and entities of the United Nations system have noted the embargo's negative impact on the economic and social development of Cuba. Some of those consequences include the effect on foreign banks' transactions with Cuba in United States dollars and on Cuban assets worldwide; retaliatory measures taken against foreign companies' investment operations in Cuba, limiting the options for attracting foreign investment to those companies that have no commercial interests in the United States; obstacles to the integration of Cuba into the global trading system, with consequent negative effects on gross domestic product growth, on export income and on industrial and agricultural production; limitations on Cuban access to development loans granted by international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank; difficulties in obtaining the necessary resources and supplies for cooperative education and health programmes in Cuba as well as external financing for agricultural and rural development programmes; and, more generally, effects that have repercussions for third countries because they cannot interact economically, academically and socially with Cuba.

The Government of Mexico maintains its bilateral and multilateral relations on the basis of the general principles of international law that govern peaceful and civilized coexistence among sovereign States. Such principles have been upheld with consistency and perseverance over time in the relationship between Mexico and Cuba.

Thus, since 1992, when the Government of the Republic of Cuba first submitted to the Assembly a draft resolution on ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the Government of the United States of America, Mexico has voted in favour of the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly on this subject. My Government has demonstrated to the international community its firm opposition to the extraterritorial application of national laws in other countries in violation of international law. For 16 years, Mexico has stated that the embargo must end and has supported the inclusion of Cuba in all regional integration mechanisms in order to foster economic and commercial exchange and cooperation for development.

Mexico believes that the observance of international law and the norms and principles that

govern coexistence among nations, and respectful dialogue, irrespective of differences and inequalities, are necessary instruments for overcoming differences between States and guaranteeing international peace. Societies evolve and change in line with their own circumstances, and not as a result of externally imposed mechanisms.

For the aforementioned reasons, Mexico will support the draft resolution (A/62/L.1) that has been submitted at this session on this subject.

Mr. Hoang Chi Trung (Viet Nam): My delegation thanks the Secretary-General for his report (A/62/92) on the implementation of resolution 61/11, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba". The Vietnamese delegation fully associates itself with the statements by the representatives of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 and China on this important agenda item.

My delegation welcomes the presence of His Excellency Mr. Felipe Pérez Roque, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, at our deliberations today.

The economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against the Republic of Cuba for almost half a century has caused huge economic damage and untold suffering for the Cuban people. It has severely hindered their economic and social development and undermined their endeavours to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Direct economic damages caused by the embargo to the Cuban people exceed $89 billion over almost 50 years; last year's damages to Cuba's foreign trade alone amounted to over $1.4 billion.

My delegation expresses its serious concern regarding the fact that this long-standing embargo has not only remained intact, but has also been tightened, with the enforcement of laws and provisions of a distinctly extraterritorial character. Viet Nam holds that this embargo, the longest in history, runs counter to the fundamental principles of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the regulations of the World Trade Organization. The prolongation of such coercive economic measures will only cause further tension in the bilateral relations between the United States and Cuba and more hardship and difficulties for the Cuban people, especially those most vulnerable, such as women and children.

It is thus a surprise to no one that the embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba has been repeatedly rejected by a growing number of Member States, to the point where the opposition has become almost unanimous. Today, the presence of such a large number of Member States and their active participation in these deliberations are strong evidence of their opposition to these unilateral extraterritorial measures.

Every nation has the inalienable right to determine its own political system and the path of development suitable to its specific conditions. Viet Nam is convinced that the differences between the United States and Cuba should be settled through dialogue and negotiations on the basis of mutual respect, respect for each other's independence and sovereignty and non-interference in each other's internal affairs. We believe that the normalization and development of friendly relations between the two geographically close neighbours will serve the interests of their peoples and those of regional and international peace and security. In that spirit, my delegation calls upon the United States of America to put an immediate end to its policy of economic, commercial and financial embargo against the Republic of Cuba.

Finally, my delegation wishes to reaffirm our country's sentiments of friendship and solidarity with the Cuban people. The Vietnamese Government and people will continue to do our utmost to assist the Government and the peace-loving people of Cuba in overcoming the effects of the embargo.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Felipe Peréz Roque, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, to introduce draft resolution A/62/L.1.

Mr. Pérez Roque (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): The economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba — and against the rights of the peoples represented in this Assembly — has already lasted for nearly half a century.

According to conservative estimates, it has caused losses to Cuba of more than $89 billion. At the United States dollar's current value, that accounts to no less than $222 billion. Everyone can understand the level of socio-economic development that Cuba would have attained had it not been subjected to this unrelenting and obsessive economic war. The embargo

is today the main obstacle to the development and well-being of the Cubans and a flagrant, massive and systematic violation of the rights of our people.

The embargo attempts to subdue the Cuban people through starvation and disease. That is how the essence of the embargo on Cuba was explained at a meeting led by President Dwight Eisenhower in 1960 — the following is a quote from the document before that meeting, which was subsequently declassified in the 1990s:

> "There is no effective political opposition in Cuba .... The only predictable measure we have today to alienate internal support for the revolution is through disillusionment and desperation, based on dissatisfaction and economic duress. Every possible means should be undertaken promptly to weaken the economic life of Cuba. Money and supplies must be denied to Cuba in order to decrease real wages, bring about hunger, desperation and the overthrow of government."

Forty-seven years later, President George W. Bush repeated it in these words: "I also urge our Congress to show our support and solidarity for fundamental change in Cuba by maintaining our embargo".

Seven in every ten Cubans have only ever known the perennial threat of aggression against our homeland and the economic hardships caused by the relentless persecution of the embargo.

The United States has ignored, with arrogance and political blindness, the 15 resolutions adopted by the General Assembly calling for the lifting of the embargo against Cuba. What is more, over the past year, they have adopted new measures bordering on madness and fanaticism, which further tighten the sanctions and the extraterritorial persecution of our relations with the countries represented in this Assembly.

The embargo had never been enforced with such viciousness as over the past year. On 14 August 2006, the Government of the United States went as far as to penalizing the Alliance of Baptists, claiming that some of its faithful engaged in tourism during a visit to Cuba for religious purposes. In December 2006, the Government of the United States prevented American companies from providing Internet services to Cuba. As a result, in Cuba, if one tries to access Google Earth, as do millions of users around the world every day, one gets the following response: "This service is not available in your country."

Cuban children have been particularly harmed by the embargo that President Bush has promised to strengthen. Cuban children do not have the use of Sevorane, an inhaled anaesthetic manufactured by the North American company Abbott, and the best paediatric general anaesthesia. We must use lower-quality substitutes. President Bush will undoubtedly explain that by saying that those Cuban children are collateral victims of his war against Cuba.

Cuban children suffering from arrhythmia can no longer receive the pacemakers that the American company Saint Jude Medical once sold us. Saint Jude Medical was forced to stop doing business with Cuba due to the extreme pressure exerted by the Office for Foreign Assets Control. The United States delegation should explain to the Assembly why Cuban children suffering from cardiac arrhythmia are enemies of the United States Government. The Cuban delegation cannot explain it. Perhaps the United States delegation could, as culture has been one of the main targets in prosecuting the blockade.

The Government of the United States prevents Cuba from participating in the Puerto Rico International Book Fair. Blocking the participation of Cuban writers and publishers in a book fair is a barbaric act.

Beginning in December 2006, hotels belonging to the American chains Ritz-Carlton, Hilton and Marriott received instructions from the United States Government to cancel contracts with Cuban musicians working temporarily in their hotels throughout the world. Only if they move to Miami, declare their admiration for President Bush's policies and regret ever having lived in Cuba will they be able to be hired again.

Today, I would like to reiterate our solidarity with American filmmakers Oliver Stone and Michael Moore. Mr. Stone has been fined by the United States Government, in the name of freedom, for travelling to Cuba to shoot the documentaries *Comandante* and *Looking for Fidel*. I really do not know how President Bush thought that Oliver Stone could find Fidel unless he travelled to Cuba. Michael Moore is being investigated for the trip that he made to our country

last March to shoot his documentary *Sicko*. This is twenty-first century McCarthyism.

With that grotesque persecution of the honest word and independent art, the President of the United States is emulating the Inquisition of the Middle Ages. The difference is that this modern-day Inquisition is much more barbaric and lethal. For it organized the looting of the fabulous Baghdad Library and the burning of over 1 million volumes.

I should now like to recall the words expressed by international Cuban artist Alicia Alonso in a recent letter to American intellectuals and artists:

> "Let us work together so that Cuban artists and writers can take their talent to the United States, and for you not to be prevented from coming to our island to share your knowledge and values — for a song, a book, a scientific study or a performance not to be irrationally considered a crime".

The blockade persecutes human exchanges and relations between the peoples of Cuba and the United States. It also prevents normal relations between Cuban families on both sides of the Florida Strait. Fines of up to $1 million for companies and $250,000 for individuals, as well as prison sentences of up to 10 years for offenders, is the price to be risked by an American visiting our country as a tourist or by a Cuban residing in the United States who wants to visit a sick relative in Cuba.

On more than one occasion, the Assembly has heard the representatives of the United States say that the issue that we are now debating is a bilateral matter that should not be dealt with by this forum. They will likely repeat that fallacious argument later when they explain their vote. However, as members of the Assembly are well aware, the brutal economic war imposed on Cuba affects not only Cubans. If that alone were the case, it would be an extremely serious situation. But it is even worse: it is an affront to international law, the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, and the right of every country to engage in free and sovereign trade with whomever it chooses.

The extraterritorial enforcement of American laws, in disregard of the legitimate interests of third countries — the same countries represented by those present in the Hall — to invest and develop normal economic and trade relations with Cuba is an issue that concerns all States gathered here. In the period spanning May 2006 to May 2007 alone, at least 30 countries were affected by the extraterritorial provisions of the blockade policy against Cuba. Let us look at just a few examples.

On 28 July 2006, the Netherlands Caribbean Bank of the Netherlands Antilles experienced the enforcement of blockade regulations. That included the freezing of accounts from this bank held in the United States and a prohibition from carrying out any transactions involving American citizens or entities.

On 4 May 2007, the British company PSL Energy Services was fined $164,000 for exporting oil industry equipment and services to Cuba.

Sabroe compressors could also not be exported to Cuba, once the Danish company that manufactures them was acquired by an American corporation.

The United States multinational General Electric took over the Finnish company Datex-Ohmeda. Up until the day of the takeover Cuba was able to continue to purchase its excellent Finnish-made anaesthesia and multipurpose monitoring equipment as usual.

When Cuba's Institute for Food Nutrition and Hygiene tried to buy an infrared spectrophotometer from the Japanese company Shimadzu, it discovered that it was forbidden to do so under the blockade because more than 10 per cent of its components were of American origin.

The German company BASF AG could not sell a herbicide to Cuba, neither from Germany nor from its subsidiaries in Latin America, because the active ingredient it contains is of American origin.

Since late 2006, when the Spanish cruise ship company Pullmantur was acquired by the American company Royal Caribbean, the cruise ship *Holiday Dream*, which is owned by Pullmantur, has had to suspend its operations in Cuba.

In December 2006, the management of Norway's Scandic Hotel, which had been bought in March 2006 by the American hotel chain Hilton, cancelled the reservations of a Cuban delegation that was to attend an international tourism trade show. That caused great scandal and was widely rejected by Norwegian public opinion. However, the most incredible thing was yet to happen. Hilton Group's spokeswoman in London made

a public announcement — and I urge representatives to listen clearly — that the chain would bar bookings by Cubans in all its hotels around the world, because otherwise it would be subject to fines, or even prison sentences, under the laws of the blockade.

However, undoubtedly the most notorious episode to take place this year vis-à-vis the United States blockade against Cuba was the pitched battle waged by the United States Treasury Department against Cuba's relations with third-country financial and banking institutions. That was especially possible after the United States Government and its special services gained access to the confidential information held by the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT). It is through that body that nearly all payments and message exchanges are transacted by financial institutions around the world.

In the past year, more than 20 banks from various countries have been grossly threatened in order to disrupt any kind of relations or transactions with Cuba. For understandable reasons, I cannot give the Assembly more information on such a sensitive issue, as that would facilitate the obsessive persecution on the part of American agencies that are entirely devoted to this ignoble task.

Just a few days ago, the President of the United States said that the Cuban regime uses the United States embargo as a scapegoat for all of Cuba's miseries. However, based on information provided by 118 countries and 21 international organizations, the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/62/92 clearly and thoroughly confirms the actions undertaken by the United States Administration in the course of the past year to strengthen the blockade and intensify its serious consequences for Cuba.

The General Assembly has an opportunity today to freely and openly voice the opinion of the international community on the policy of blockade and aggression that the United States has imposed on Cubans for nearly 50 years. At this very moment, back in Cuba our people are following with both attention and hope the decision that members of the Assembly will take. They do so recalling the words of Fidel: "Never had a nation such sacred things to defend nor such profound convictions for which to fight".

Cuba will not surrender. It fights and will continue to fight, with the conviction that defending our rights today is tantamount to defending the rights of all the peoples represented in the Assembly. On behalf of Cuba, I ask representatives to vote in favour of the draft resolution entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba". I ask the Assembly to do so in defiance of the lies and threats made in recent days. We ask that you vote in favour of Cuba's draft resolution, as a vote in favour is also a vote in favour of all the peoples of the world.

I shall conclude by recalling the words by José Martí, apostle of Cuba's independence: "He who rises with Cuba today will be rising for all time to come". Freedom for the five Cuban heroes, fighters against terrorism and political prisoners, in American jails! Freedom for the five Cuban heroes! I do indeed have a legitimate right to say "Viva Cuba libre! Viva Cuba Libre! Viva Cuba libre!"

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): Let me begin by welcoming the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, whose presence at this debate is an indication of the importance we all attach to this issue.

As we have just heard, for more than 47 years the people of Cuba have lived under a unilateral economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed on them by their neighbour, the United States of America. That means that the majority Cuban citizens have known no other life than a life under coercive measures. But, despite everything, the Cuban people have survived.

That long-standing economic, commercial and financial embargo has been consistently rejected by a growing number of Member States of the United Nations, to a point where their opposition has become almost unanimous. Throughout the embargo, the Cuban people have extended a hand of friendship and solidarity to other peoples around the world. For instance, it is not unusual to find Cuban doctors and nurses in many parts of Latin America and Africa. Cuba's outstanding work in the areas of health, education and biotechnology in many developing countries, and throughout the world in general, is recognized by the international community. The embargo that was designed to stifle the everyday lives of the Cuban people has instead produced a contribution by Cuba to the betterment of the lives of other peoples around the world.

Cuba's contribution has also included supporting struggles for freedom and justice around the world. For example, in South Africa we recognized Cuba's

contribution to our own freedom and democracy. The Wall of Remembrance of our heroes of the struggle against apartheid lists a number of Cuban fighters who fought alongside our freedom fighters, and even gave their lives to see South Africa free. Today, we remember and honour those heroes, who succeeded in spite of the embargo aimed at their everyday lives.

South Africa has consistently opposed all aspects of the embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba, for more fundamental reasons that go beyond the solidarity we share with the Cuban people. South Africa views the continued imposition of an economic, commercial and financial embargo as a violation of the principles of the sovereign equality of States and of non-intervention and non-interference in each other's domestic affairs. South Africa has therefore repeatedly joined the vast majority of countries in expressing its disagreement with, and opposition to, all aspects of the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba.

We are guided by the basic norms of international law and conduct and our principled support for the need to eliminate coercive economic measures as a means of achieving political and economic goals. South Africa believes that constructive dialogue can foster mutual trust and understanding, as well as engender harmony and peaceful coexistence among nations.

South Africa is committed to working towards a better world for all, including the Cuban people, in which nations coexist peacefully, no matter how large or small. The achievement of such peaceful coexistence among nations requires adherence by all nations to the rule of law, including international law.

My delegation believes that the presence of such a large number of Member States in this Hall today, and their participation in these deliberations, is an indication of their opposition to unilateral extraterritorial measures. We are here to express our firm opposition to coercive economic measures as a means of exerting pressure on developing countries, as such measures are contrary to international law, international humanitarian law, the United Nations Charter and the norms and principles governing peaceful relations among States.

South Africa will join the majority in the Assembly in supporting the draft resolution before us today. We will vote yes because this relentless and unilateral action has caused untold suffering to the people of Cuba. We believe that the overwhelming majority of Member States present today will join us in voting yes in support of the Cuban people.

Mr. Mavroyiannis (Cyprus), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Finally, my delegation wishes to associate itself with the statement delivered earlier by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. Liu Zhenmin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation supports the statement delivered earlier by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

For 15 consecutive years, the General Assembly has adopted resolutions urging all countries, in compliance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law, to repeal or invalidate all laws and measures with extraterritorial effect that compromise the sovereignty of other States, undermine the legitimate rights and interests of entities and persons under the jurisdiction of those States and affect the freedom of trade and navigation. Regrettably, however, the long-term economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba imposed by its rich neighbour is still in place.

In an age of economic globalization exchanges and cooperation on an equal footing among countries represent the trend of our times. Normal economic, commercial and financial ties among countries are in the interest of all countries, and are by no means a favour given by any one country to others. Dialogue on an equal footing is the best way to resolve any difference. The international community has the right to raise serious concerns over the embargo and sanctions suffered by Cuba over the years, and to request the county concerned to end such embargo and sanctions.

The 40-odd years of embargo and sanctions against Cuba not only harm the interests of Cuba and many other countries, thereby seriously hampering development efforts at the international level, they also go against the principles of democracy, freedom, the rule of law and human rights.

First, the practice of attempting to force another country, through embargo and sanctions, to give up its

right to independently choose its own path to development, even to overthrow its Government, constitutes a violation of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the basic norms governing contemporary international relations. That kind of practice has nothing to do with promoting democracy and freedom.

Secondly, the embargo and sanctions imposed against Cuba are extraterritorial in nature, and are therefore in violation of international law and can by no means promote democracy and freedom in any country. They are opposed by all countries, and run counter to the principle of trade liberalization.

Thirdly, the embargo and sanctions have seriously obstructed and constrained the efforts of the Cuban people to eradicate poverty, improve their living standards, pursue economic and social development and achieve the Millennium Development Goals. They undermine the rights of the Cuban people to life and development.

The Chinese Government has always maintained that countries should develop State-to-State relations based on equality and in compliance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and work to promote democracy and the rule of law in international relations. We believe that, in the light of their specific national conditions, countries should choose their own political, economic and social systems and their own mode of development. Differences between States should be resolved through dialogue and cooperation and on the basis of equality and mutual respect.

Given the foregoing, the Chinese Government requests an early end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo and sanctions imposed by the country concerned against Cuba. It is our hope that there will be dialogue rather than confrontation, and contacts and exchanges rather than embargo and sanctions. We hope that the relevant resolutions of the United Nations will be implemented without delay. China therefore supports the draft resolution submitted by Cuba under the current agenda item.

Mr. Pankin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Cuban Foreign Minister Felipe Pérez Roque, who is with us today, has explained in great detail the exact consequences of the United States blockade against Cuba.

We would like to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report contained in document A/62/92, which reflects the unanimous objection of Member States to the imposition of the unilateral and extraterritorial economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba.

Russia's position on the draft resolution introduced under this agenda item has not changed. Our country shares the view of the overwhelming majority of Member States, which resolutely condemns the embargo against Cuba and calls for its end. We are convinced that a halt to the embargo and the normalization of United States-Cuba relations in general would help to improve the situation and help further integrate Cuba into regional and global processes.

An appeal adopted on 18 October 2007 by the State Duma of the Russian Federation entitled "To the parliaments of United Nations Member States and international parliamentary organizations", which will also be submitted to the Secretary-General, emphasized the following points.

The continuing economic blockade against the Republic of Cuba is an act of crude pressure by the United States of America against a sovereign State. According to Cuban authorities, two thirds of Cubans were born under the blockade. The economic blockade also hinders the normal functioning of every system necessary for the lives of Cubans — including those relating to the health system, including emergency services for the severely ill, services for pregnant women and children, education, culture, science, transport and utilities. The ongoing blockade undermines Cuba's economy, with the most serious of consequences for the various sectors of the economy. The policy of economic blockade against Cuba infringes upon the rights and legitimate interests of third States.

The continuing commercial, economic and financial blockade of Cuba by the United States is counterproductive and out of step with the spirit of the times in which we live. It is a remnant from the days of the cold war. It prevents the establishment of a new just world order in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

The continuation of the blockade is also incompatible with the effort under way to reform the

United Nations, for it ignores the unanimous view of Member States regarding the need to work together to implement the principles underpinning our efforts to abandon confrontation and embrace cooperation based on respect for the rights of nations to choose for themselves their political, economic and social systems.

Guided by the fundamental principles of the Charter with regard to the inadmissibility of any discriminatory measure or interference in the internal affairs of States, Russia will continue its policy to vote in favour of the draft resolution calling for an end to the blockade.

Mr. Salim (India): We align ourselves with the statement made by the Chairperson of the Group of 77.

The nearly five-decades-old economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America has been the annual subject of debate by this body since 1991. The embargo has been reinforced by domestic laws of the United States of America, through which the extraterritorial reach of the embargo encompasses foreign companies as well as foreign subsidiaries of United States companies doing business with Cuba or Cuban entities. Such domestic laws include the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992 and the Helms-Burton Act of 1996.

The international community has been categorical in repeatedly expressing its opposition to the extraterritorial aspect of the embargo that has been implemented in accordance with United States domestic laws and regulations. We fully share that call by the international community. The General Assembly has repeatedly rejected the imposition of laws and regulations with extraterritorial impact and all other forms of coercive economic measures. Through its resolutions, it has called upon all States to respect their obligations under the United Nations Charter and international law, as well as to repeal and invalidate laws and measures that have extraterritorial effects on the sovereignty of other States, the legitimate interests of entities or persons under their jurisdiction and the freedom of trade and navigation.

The continuation of the embargo against Cuba, in particular through its extraterritorial effects, has hampered that country's ability to pursue its development imperatives. It has also caused hardship to its population in a variety of ways. The impact of the embargo has been particularly severe in the area of medical care, through a reduction in access to medical equipment, medicines and diagnostic aids. Other affected areas include food aid deliveries, the education sector, international trade and investment, transportation and access to financial markets. In addition, the embargo has had an indirect negative extraterritorial impact on Cuba's efforts to provide assistance under South-South cooperation in the field of medicine, in particular to African countries. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development concludes, in the report (A/62/92) of the Secretary-General, that the embargo by the United States of America has led to an adverse impact on gross domestic product growth, export revenues, industrial and agricultural production, trade and social sectors such as food, health, education, communications and science and technology, as well as trade diversion.

Embargoes and economic blockades are against the spirit of unhindered trade and commerce without barriers. The embargo has achieved nothing, except to create hindrances on the path of development for the people of Cuba. The continuation of the policy of sanctions and blockade, against the opinion of the overwhelming portion of the population of the world, is nothing but a desire to continue an age-old unjust arrangement. That is all the more untenable in an era of globalization, when its advocates are loudly proclaiming and working for barrier-free trade and commerce and seamless movements of goods and services around the world.

Given their geographical proximity, the United States of America and Cuba should be natural partners in trade, commerce and investment. We believe that a considerable part of the business sector in the United States of the America would like to benefit from unhindered access to the Cuban market and that many United States citizens would like to establish greater contacts with Cuba through tourism. The export of agricultural and medical products from the United States of America to Cuba, insofar as permitted by the Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act of 2000, is testimony to the interest and potential of trade and business contacts between the two countries. Various legislative attempts in the United States of America to relax the embargo also support that view. We therefore look forward to the lifting of the sanctions and the embargo against Cuba.

In conclusion, let me reiterate India's opposition to unilateral measures by countries that impinge upon

the sovereignty of another country, including attempts to extend the application of a country's laws extraterritorially to other sovereign nations. The international community must work towards establishing a just international economic environment conducive to development for all countries, free from sanctions and embargoes.

Mr. Butagira (Uganda): I associate myself with the statement made by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, as well as with the statement delivered by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Uganda supports the lifting of the embargo against Cuba. To emphasize what I am going to say, let me begin by quoting what our leaders said on the issue of democracy and sovereignty in the 2005 World Summit Outcome document.

> "We reaffirm that democracy is a universal value based on the freely expressed will of people to determine their own political, economic, social and cultural systems and their full participation in all aspects of their lives. We also reaffirm that while democracies share common features, there is no single model of democracy, that it does not belong to any country or region, and reaffirm the necessity of due respect for sovereignty and the right of self-determination." (*resolution 60/1, para. 135*)

We believe the people of Cuba have the right to determine how they are going to be governed and to choose who should govern them and for how long. We therefore view the attempt to impose sanctions on Cuba as an attempt to impose regime change in Cuba. That is not acceptable. The embargo has hurt the people of Cuba and has crippled their economic development. For many years now, through this Assembly, the international community has consistently called for the lifting of the embargo. This almost universal voice should be heeded.

Isolationism does not do anybody or any country any good. Here in the United States, a number of voices have been raised in support of lifting the embargo. Even one of the presidential candidates for next year's elections has said that, once elected, he would lift the embargo against Cuba and establish diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba.

It is high time that the United States authorities concerned heeded those overwhelming voices and lifted the embargo, which has not served any useful purpose and is a relic of the cold war era. It is against the principles of international law and free trade and is contrary to the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Siles Alvarado (Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Bolivia wishes to align itself with the statements made on behalf of the Rio Group, the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 and China.

After 47 years of a harmful embargo against Cuba and after 15 General Assembly resolutions calling for an end to the unilateral embargo by the United States, we see the utter failure of that commercial, economic and financial embargo as a mechanism seeking to impose foreign ideologies on a sovereign nation. Historical facts such as the Second World War and the Viet Nam war, to mention just a few, have shown that no brute force is capable of breaking the unshakeable will of sovereign peoples in their struggle for their right to self-determination. On the contrary, such force only serves to unite the people against their aggressors.

The eloquent details submitted by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba have very clearly shown the inhuman consequences of the embargo. The United States policy of imposing an embargo against Cuba is certainly a violation of the human rights of the Cuban people and therefore deserves corresponding sanctions.

However, the Assembly cannot take such decisions, because of the very provisions of the Charter. It is precisely for that reason that the resolutions adopted year after year, trying to put an end to the acts of aggression by certain countries, do not have any real implications for those concerned. In reforming the United Nations, we should address the imperative need to empower the General Assembly to take binding decisions on certain subjects, such as in the case of violations of human rights.

The people of Bolivia reiterate its appeal to all the world's peoples to build genuine global peace based on the principles of mutual respect among peoples, non-interference in the internal affairs of countries, the quest for solutions to conflicts through rational and sincere dialogue and respect for Mother Nature as the source of all wisdom. It is time to impose

reason. It is time to lift the inhuman embargo against the sister country of Cuba.

Mr. Abdellatif (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): We would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/62/92) on the implementation of resolution 61/11, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba". My delegation would like to express its support for the statement made by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. We would also like to welcome the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba at this meeting of the Assembly.

For more than 40 years, the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba has impeded the economic and social development of that country and has caused great hardship for the Cuban people. That has occurred even though the General Assembly and many other international forums and Governments have called for an end to the embargo, which has not only been maintained, but has also been intensified through the enforcement of unilateral extraterritorial laws and provisions.

The embargo is in contravention of the basic principles of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the stipulations of the World Trade Organization. It has been the longest embargo in history. Its continuation will only lead to further tension in bilateral relations and to further difficulties for the Cuban people, particularly the most vulnerable groups, such as women and children.

The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya once again expresses its strong opposition to unilateral measures imposed by certain States for political reasons. I would like to express our great concern regarding the continued imposition by certain States, of an extraterritorial, coercive and unilateral economic embargo. This runs counter to the principles of international law, particularly the principle of equal sovereignty of States and non-intervention in the internal affairs of other countries. The implementation of this embargo will increase the hardships of and deepen the hatred and anger between peoples with common interests. That makes it critical to abide by the principles of the United Nations Charter and to seek appropriate and civilized solutions to problems, including ways to avoid infringement of such basic human rights as the rights to development, food, medical care and essential social institutions.

The imposition of embargoes and sanctions has never been an appropriate way to solve problems between States. The United Nations Charter identifies appropriate measures for settling any bilateral issue through negotiation, reconciliation, mediation, arbitration, investigation and transparent settlement mediated by international and regional organizations and agencies on the basis of equal sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries. States have reaffirmed that approach in the resolutions of the General Assembly, which are immediately binding because they embody justice and logic and strengthen the principles of international law. Moreover, they send a clear message that comprehensive peace cannot be achieved, friendly relations between States cannot be established and development goals cannot be met without international cooperation based on mutual respect for the sovereignty of States, regardless of their size, their population and the nature of their economic and political system.

Mr. Mahiga (United Republic of Tanzania): My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on this agenda item.

The General Assembly is deliberating again, for the sixteenth year in a row, the agenda item regarding the economic, trade and financial embargo imposed on the Government and people of Cuba by the United States of America. The issue came to the General Assembly after decades of the embargo, which has now stretched for 49 years. That is almost the entire period of the existence of the current Government of the Republic of Cuba.

The United Republic of Tanzania would like to reiterate its sympathy with the people and Government of Cuba and join other Members of the United Nations, whose number has been growing by the year, in calling for the ending of the embargo against the people and the Government of Cuba.

Over the years, it has become evident that the wide-ranging embargo is specifically targeted to inflict maximum suffering on the people of Cuba, ostensibly to undermine their Government. The victims have indeed been people across the board, with most suffering experienced by the most vulnerable — the

young, the old and people with disabilities. That is morally reprehensible given that among the highest and most respected values espoused by this Assembly are human life, human dignity and the protection of civilians irrespective of race, colour or citizenship.

It is an understatement to say that the heroic resilience of the Cuban people has made the embargo a futile exercise. It is time to review that strategy, whatever its worth, at a time when international peace and security, harmony and understanding are feverishly sought after by the international community after the end of the cold war and the emergence of new threats and discords in the world.

The embargo was already biting and the people of Cuba were heroically standing firm to weather its consequences when the Torricelli and Helms-Burton Acts were enacted to tighten the embargo by imposing economic restrictions on third parties doing business with Cuba. Embargoes and blockades are antiquated means of warfare at a time when there are multitudes of strategies, options and methods of resolving differences in the international community through the United Nations and bilateral and regional forums. Even in the face of some of the most threatening challenges to international peace and security, total embargoes, blockades or sanctions against civilians have been replaced by more humane means of dealing with adversaries.

There cannot be a better gauge of the disapproval of those outdated, civilian-targeted measures than the overwhelming support of this Assembly for the lifting of the embargo. We would be adopting double standards if the views and support of this General Assembly on other issues were taken as a yardstick for mobilizing and advancing support or opposition to particular policies — and such views are usually heeded by the concerned parties — but not on the issue of the blockade against Cuba. The United Republic of Tanzania calls for wisdom to prevail by reviewing, progressively easing and eventually lifting the embargo against a people whose only crime is to live on their sovereign soil.

The weather has not been kinder, either. As we speak, the people of Cuba are bracing for the onslaught of yet another tropical storm, with the usual expected devastation. Hurricanes visit that island almost every year and cause untold damage to the economy and social infrastructure of the people. Those natural calamities should be enough to prick the conscience of people and Governments that attach value and respect to human life and the suffering of innocent people.

On the contrary, more pain is added to injury by the cumulative consequences of the embargo, which have been passed on from one Cuban generation to another. We hope that these appeals from this world rostrum will not be made in vain and will be heeded by all people who love peace, their elected representatives, and leaders who are capable of bringing light to the end of this long, dark tunnel of embargoes and blockades against the people of Cuba.

Mr. Kapambwe (Zambia): Please allow me to congratulate the President of the General Assembly for the able manner in which he is presiding over this session of the General Assembly.

Zambia wishes to align itself fully with the statements made by the representatives of Pakistan and Egypt on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the Non-Aligned Movement, respectively.

Zambia has noted with appreciation the report of the Secretary-General, contained in document A/62/92, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba". We believe that the report has provided us with an objective and clear analysis of the negative impact arising from the sanctions against Cuba. We maintain that the Helms-Burton legislation violates the sovereignty of Cuba and is a breach of international law, in addition to not being inline with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, including those of the sovereign equality of States, non-interference in their internal affairs and the freedom of international trade and navigation.

The report of the Secretary-General once again vindicates the position consistently held by the Assembly over the years, namely, that the embargo against Cuba hurts innocent people, in particular the most vulnerable, who are women and children. In addition, Zambia notes that, despite the hardship caused by the embargo for more than four decades, the Cuban people have become more determined and united in defence of their country's sovereignty, welfare and dignity, for which they have sacrificed so dearly.

Zambia has repeatedly called on the United States of America to lift the economic embargo against Cuba.

The embargo has a direct negative impact on the principles of free trade and navigation. We have been and are committed to the strengthening of universal respect for international law in the conduct of all forms of relations among sovereign States.

Mr. İlkin (Turkey), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Based on the information compiled by the Secretary-General in his latest report — and, indeed, in the report of the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba — Zambia will once again vote in favour of this draft resolution. My delegation's vote is based on Zambia's firm belief in the sanctity of the Charter of the United Nations, which binds Member States. We reiterate that the embargo has adversely affected the well-being of the Cuban people.

In conclusion, Zambia appeals to all Member States to support the call for the immediate ending of the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba.

Mrs. Rubiales de Chamorro (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): Cuba — a country that is at once Caribbean, Taino, Latin American, African and internationalist — has for more than 50 years continued to heroically resist the most aggressive imperialist policies in modern history. Cuba's patriotic courage and socialist conviction have been stronger than the millions of dollars wasted on a war of aggression. They have also been stronger than the inhuman and illegal commercial and economic blockade and all the technology invested by the empire to dash the dreams and will of the Cuban people.

Nicaragua, which was also a victim of the same sort of imperialist policies and commercial and economic blockades, which included the mining of its ports, experienced for itself the consequences of such inhuman measures against peoples undergoing development and seeking to recover their sovereignty and defend their natural resources in the face of ferocious imperialist and colonialist plundering.

Thanks to the indomitable will of its people, of Rubén Darío and of Sandino, Nicaragua is today proud to join Latin America and the Caribbean in support of the draft resolution (A/62/L.1) submitted by Cuba, thereby becoming the 184th assenting vote following 16 years of shameful non-participation in the voting.

Commercial relations in the international community are today affected by the extraterritorial nature of the illegal commercial and economic blockade imposed by the United States against Cuba. All those policies — along with so-called complementary legislation known as the Helms-Burton and Torricelli laws, the Cuban Adjustment Act and the Cuban Transition Act, which is also known as the Bush plan — are intrusive and flagrant violations of international law that are reprehensible in any circumstances.

As we discuss Cuba and the policies aimed against it today, we should remember the five Cuban heroes who continue to be unjustly imprisoned in United States jails. To them and their families, we send out our warmest expression of solidarity.

The cold war is a thing of the past. Various sorts of relations have blossomed in various countries. We ourselves can attest as to how old political, ideological and even military adversaries are developing political and commercial relations in an environment of ever-greater normalcy, in which each actor looks after his own interests without having to turn to blockades, pressure and threats that have an impact upon the sovereignty and trade of third countries.

The inevitable question therefore is, Why is the will of the international community, which demands and end to this political, commercial and economic aberration, being disregarded year after year? Why does the illegal blockade against Cuba continue? Could it be because of Cuba's example of human solidarity? Could it be because the Cuban people, while fighting against a criminal blockade, are sparing no effort to join with their Government to help their brothers and sisters in the Bolivarian Alternative for the Peoples of Latin America, as well as Caribbean, native, Latin American, African and Asian peoples? Wherever there is humanitarian need, one will find Cuba's doctors, teachers, technicians, academics and internationalists — one will find the gaze of Che. That is how Cuba is, always willing to share what it has achieved through so much sacrifice and patriotism. It is even willing to share with developed countries themselves — which, if they were not sometimes so proud, would accept the humanitarian assistance that Cuba is always willing to provide to any country in the world.

We commend the initiatives of the Cuban Government to achieve unconditional dialogue based on an equal footing in order to help find a political solution to this anachronistic blockade. We regret that the response has always been the same, namely, the imposition of new measures to yet further expand the economic and financial blockade against Cuba. Nevertheless, we are encouraged by the fact that a growing number of American business people, religious leaders, academics, scientists, students and elected officials are siding with the international community, which, on the basis of international law, is demanding a definitive end of the blockade against Cuba.

Whatever the empire's reason or justification, the Government of the United States of America should end the commercial and economic blockade. Any problems with real or potential effects on relations between countries should be resolved in a civilized manner through dialogue and peaceful negotiation and on the basis of mutual respect for the legal sovereignty and equality of States.

Latin America and the Caribbean, the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 and China have categorically supported Cuba. Nicaragua, which has always maintained its solidarity, reiterates its unconditional support for the heroic people and Government of Cuba in their titanic battle against the constant aggression of the empire and for the return of Guantánamo, as well as in its efforts to protect its achievements, sovereignty, self-determination and socialist homeland.

Mr. Chidyausiku (Zimbabwe): My delegation aligns itself with the statements made by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Zimbabwe would like to reiterate its firm commitment and adherence to the fundamental principles of the sovereign equality of States, non-interference in their internal affairs and the freedom of international trade and navigation. Zimbabwe has consistently advocated for the revocation of laws and measures with extra territorial application that have been applied and are being applied unilaterally against Member States.

It is a matter of public record that, for over four decades, all the debates at the United Nations have objected to the application of unilateral economic measures in order to achieve certain political objectives. Numerous appeals from the majority of Member States and resolutions of the General Assembly have failed to convince successive United States Administrations to end the unilateral measures imposed on the people and Government of Cuba. That extension of the territorial jurisdiction of the United States to all countries is contrary to the principles of national sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of other States, which are recognized under international law and as set forth in the Charter of the United Nations. That policy of the United States not only undermines the Cuban people's right to development but also contradicts the freedom of trade and navigation and contravenes the provisions of the World Trade Organization, of which the United States is a member.

As if that were not enough, the Cuban people, like their Zimbabwean counterparts, have been and continue to be bombarded by propaganda broadcasts by radio stations set up and financed by the Administration in Washington. The ultimate aim of those illegal broadcasts is to incite some sections of the populations to effect regime change in both targeted countries. The doctrine of regime change contradicts the letter and spirit of the principle of sovereignty, which allows people to freely choose the socio-economic and political dispensation of their liking. There is no justification whatsoever for the continuation of those cruel, illegitimate and immoral United States hostile policies against the Cuban Government and its people.

As a current victim of domestic laws and legislation with extraterritorial impact, Zimbabwe fully understands the need to end the unilateral and illegal economic embargo on Cuba. Zimbabwe therefore firmly stands by the heroic people of Cuba in their fight against that illegal embargo.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/62/L.1.

Before giving the floor to the representative of the United States, who wishes to speak in explanation of vote before the vote, may I kindly remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Goddard (United States of America): As in years past, the United States wishes to point out the fundamental fact that the exercise of the sovereign right to decide whether and to what extent to trade with another Government is a bilateral issue and, as such, should not come before the General Assembly. We note that many other States or regional groups have, from time to time, determined to restrict transactions with others for a variety of reasons. They should consider whether this draft resolution sets a precedent that they would find acceptable in other contexts.

Cuba's problems derive not from any decision of the United States, but from the embargo on freedom that the Cuban regime has imposed on its own people. The Cuban Government denies its people information, access to the outside world, the right to travel and opportunities to better their lives economically. We maintain our policy of directing aid and trade into the hands of the Cuban people to break the absolute control that the Cuban regime holds over the resources that its people need.

According to the Cuban Government's own trade statistics, the United States has exported nearly $2 billion in agricultural, medical and humanitarian goods to Cuba since 2002. We are one of Cuba's largest suppliers of food and one of Cuba's largest trading partners. In 2006 alone, we authorized the provision of over $270 million in food and medicines by private citizens and organizations, making the American people the largest providers of humanitarian aid to the Cuban people in the entire world.

Now more than ever, we invite the Member States considering this draft resolution to reject the arguments of the Cuban Government and focus on effecting a transition in Cuba that would restore its people's fundamental rights. We also encourage Member States and non-governmental organizations to promote free and unfettered access to the Internet in Cuba by all Cubans, to support independent libraries and journalists and to broaden educational opportunities for all Cuban young people, not just a privileged few.

Finally, we call on the international community to join together in demanding that the Cuban Government unconditionally release all political prisoners as the essential step in beginning a process that restores to the Cuban people their basic human rights.

It is long past time that the Cuban people enjoyed the blessings of economic and political freedom. Instead of voting in favour of this draft resolution condemning the United States for declining to engage in unrestricted financial transactions with a regime that deprives its own people of the fundamental human rights that this body is charged with protecting, we urge Member States to oppose the draft resolution and to condemn the Cuban Government's internal embargo on freedom, which is the real cause of the suffering of the Cuban people.

The Acting President: We have heard the only speaker in explanation of vote before the voting.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/62/L.1. A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kiribati, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Moldova, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nauru, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal,

Qatar, Republic of Korea, Romania, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, San Marino, Sao Tome and Principe, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Somalia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Vanuatu, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe.

Against:

Israel, Marshall Islands, Palau, United States of America.

Abstaining:

Micronesia (Federated States of).

Draft resolution A/62/L.1 was adopted by 184 votes to 4, with 1 abstention (resolution 62/3).

The Acting President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote after the voting, may I kindly remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. De Lemos Godinho (Portugal): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The candidate countries Turkey, Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia, and the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, as well as Ukraine and Moldova, align themselves with this explanation of vote.

The European Union believes that the trade policy of the United States towards Cuba is fundamentally a bilateral issue. That notwithstanding, the European Union and its member States have clearly expressed their opposition to the extraterritorial extension of the United States embargo as contained in the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992 and the Helms-Burton Act of 1996.

The European Union cannot accept that unilateral measures imposed by the United States on specific countries limit the Union's economic and commercial relations with third countries, in this case Cuba. Therefore, in November 1996, the Council of Ministers of the European Union adopted a regulation and a joint action to protect the interests of natural or legal persons resident in the European Union against the extraterritorial effects of the Helms-Burton legislation that prohibits compliance with that legislation.

Moreover, on 18 May 1998, at the European Union-United States Summit in London, a package was agreed covering waivers to titles III and IV of the Helms-Burton Act, a commitment by the United States Administration to resist future extraterritorial legislation of that kind and an understanding with respect to disciplines for the strengthening of investment protection. The European Union continues to urge the United States to implement its side of the 18 May 1998 understanding.

The European Union's policy towards Cuba is clear and was set out in a common position in 1996. The objective of the EU in its relations with Cuba is to encourage a peaceful process of transition, led by the Cuban people, to a pluralist democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, sustainable economic recovery and an improvement in the living standards of the Cuban people. The European Union underlines its willingness to pursue a comprehensive and open dialogue with both the Cuban Government and Cuban civil society on all topics of mutual interest, including in the political, human rights, economic, scientific and cultural fields. The European Union reiterates its invitation for dialogue and welcomes the fact that preliminary talks took place in New York on the occasion of this year's session of the General Assembly.

The EU deplores the fact that the human rights situation in Cuba has not fundamentally changed, despite a decrease in the number of political prisoners and acts of harassment. The Cuban Government continues to deny its citizens internationally recognized civil, political and economic rights and freedoms. The EU once again urges the Cuban Government to release unconditionally all political

prisoners, which is a key priority in its policy towards Cuba. In particular, the EU expresses its utmost concern at the deteriorating health of several political prisoners who are members of the group of 75 political prisoners detained since March 2003. The EU calls on the Cuban authorities to release them immediately. The EU also reiterates its call on the Cuban Government to grant freedom of expression and free access to information.

The Cuban Government's achievements in health care and education are undermined by its restrictions on civil, political and economic rights. Domestic Cuban economic policy — as well as the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States — seriously hampers the economic development of Cuba, negatively affecting the standards of living of the Cuban people.

With regard to the United States of America, we express our rejection of all unilateral measures against Cuba, which are contrary to commonly accepted rules of international trade. We reiterate our view that the lifting of the United States trade embargo would open Cuba's economy, to the benefit of the Cuban people.

With regard to Cuba, the European Union urges the Cuban authorities to bring about real improvements in all the areas I have mentioned.

For all the reasons to which I have referred, and in spite of serious criticism on Cuba's human rights record, the European Union has unanimously voted in favour of the draft resolution.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the countries of the Common Market of the South (MERCOSUR) — Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Venezuela and Uruguay — as well as the associated States of Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru.

As in previous years, the member countries of MERCOSUR and associated States have voted in favour of the draft resolution just adopted. We did so because it is consistent with the group's traditional position. Our vote is also in line with our position in favour of multilateralism and in rejection of the application of unilateral coercive measures that violate free trade and transparent international trade — and are therefore against the well-being of peoples and impede regional integration processes.

The embargo against Cuba contravenes principles of international law, in particular the norms governing international trade and those linking the members of the World Trade Organization. The embargo has been condemned by the General Assembly and other forums and international organizations, including the Organization of American States, the Latin American Economic System, the Ibero-American summit and the summit-level meetings of the Rio Group.

The countries of MERCOSUR and its associated States once again reject the promulgation and application of this sort of unilateral coercive measures with extraterritorial reach, whose validity we do not accept. We therefore reiterate our support for multilateralism as the peaceful and just way to resolve disputes between States in a way that promotes understanding, security, human rights and cooperation.

Mr. Dapkiunas (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The economic and financial blockade against Cuba has been in place for almost half a century. It undermines the international principles of the equality of States and non-interference in their internal affairs, as well as that of the freedom of international trade and navigation. The overwhelming majority of Member States believe the embargo against Cuba to be neither a civilized nor a constructive way to address international disputes.

The negative consequences of the application of the extraterritorial policy of embargo pose the main obstacles to the speedy implementation of the projects and programmes for the economic and social development of Cuba that are being implemented today. The blockade is causing hundreds of millions of dollars in damage to Cuba's economy and social situation. The future and health of the population are at stake.

Every country has the right to choose its own model for development. We believe it is impermissible for any individual country to attempt to force its will upon others through the use of military, economic or other means.

We continue to admire the courage of the Cuban nation, which continues to be an exemplary defender of the dignity and sovereignty of the Cuban people. Belarus is proud to take this opportunity to join its voice with others demanding an end to the embargo against the Cuban people.

Mr. Khoc (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): We would like to reiterate our view that the policy of unilateral boycott by the United States against Cuba must be condemned. The international community has repeatedly condemned such hostile policies. There is today growing rejection in the international community of such unilateral policies adopted by Washington, as exemplified by the unjust financial, trade and economic blockade against Cuba — especially given everything that country has suffered, in particular by its women and children.

The United States that always preaches to the world about human rights, is violating such human rights by imposing an embargo against Cuba. The United States boycott and embargo are a crime against humanity. They violate the Charter of the United Nations in the most flagrant way and also violate international law and trade laws. The Charter clearly states that pressures on Member States because of their national choices and their political, economic and social systems are rejected and undemocratic and warrant condemnation and denunciation.

The Sudan has suffered a great deal from Washington's unilateral policies. We therefore voted in support of the draft resolution. Such a vote is a vote against unilateralism, hegemony and against any one country's imposition of its policies and dictates against another through interference in their internal affairs.

My country would like to express its support for the statements made by the representatives of Pakistan and Egypt on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the Non-Aligned Movement, respectively. We would like to reiterate our solidarity with the people and Government of Cuba. We demand that the unjust blockade and embargo be lifted immediately.

Mr. Lynn (Myanmar): My delegation associates itself with the statements delivered on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 and China.

We welcome the report of the Secretary-General on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba (A/62/92).

For 15 years, the international community has continuously expressed its unequivocal support for the call to end the economic, commercial and financial embargo by the United States against Cuba. The Summit Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, held in Havana in September 2006, also reiterated its call upon the Government of the United States of America to put an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba.

The promulgation and application by Member States of laws and regulations with extraterritorial effects on the sovereignty of other States and the legitimate interests of persons under their jurisdiction, as well as the freedom of trade and navigation, violates both the spirit and letter of the Charter of the United Nations and the universally accepted principles of international law. Strictly adhering to that principle, Myanmar opposes all forms of economic and financial sanctions and embargoes that are contrary to international law. As one of the initiators of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, Myanmar scrupulously respects the principles of the sovereign equality of States, non-intervention and non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries.

The economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States on Cuba has adversely affected the Cuban people and Cuban nationals living in other countries.

The embargo has also negatively impacted third parties. The blockade imposed on the health sector in particular causes undue suffering and hardship to the Cuban people. That act is inhumane and we therefore strongly oppose such measures. Those measures can in no way promote peace and stability in the region. For that reason, Myanmar wholeheartedly associates itself with the call by the international community on the United States to bring an end to the embargo and sanctions against Cuba.

My delegation, in reaffirming our opposition to laws and regulations that have extraterritorial effects and as a manifestation of our friendship towards the Government and people of Cuba, therefore voted in favour of resolution 62/3.

Mr. Hill (Australia): Australia has consistently expressed its opposition as a matter of principle to the promulgation and application by Member States of extraterritorial laws and measures where such laws and measures affect the sovereignty of other States, the legitimate interests of entities or persons under their

jurisdiction, as well as freedom of trade and navigation.

Such laws and measures are not justified by the principles of international law and comity. Australia is therefore concerned about the extraterritorial aspects of the Helms-Burton act of 1996 and, for that reason, has again voted for the resolution submitted under the agenda item.

Our vote should not be interpreted as in any way endorsing the internal policies of Cuba. Holding political prisoners and failing to comply with international human rights standards is not an internal matter; it should be of concern to all of us. We should take every opportunity to remind Cuba of its international obligations and urge its full cooperation with international human rights treaties, bodies and mechanisms. In particular, we should urge the Cuban Government to meet its responsibilities to respect the rights of all its population.

The Cuban Minister today claimed that the blockade is the main obstacle to the rights of the Cuban people. He will, with respect, have greater credibility in pursuing that argument when he can show that the internal rights of all Cuban people are properly respected and protected by his own Government.

Mr. Tharyat (Indonesia): Indonesia associates itself with the statements made by the representatives of Pakistan on beha!f of the Group of 77 and China and of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

Indonesia voted in favour of resolution 62/3, as we believe that the actions highlighted therein not only undermine the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and international law, but also severely threaten the freedom of trade and investment. Those sentiments were echoed during the thirty-first annual ministerial meeting of the Group of 77 and China, held in New York on 27 September, where ministers once again firmly rejected the imposition of laws and regulations with extraterritorial impact and all other forms of coercive economic measures, including unilateral sanctions against developing countries.

The application of an economic and trade embargo will only produce negative effects on the economic and social lives of innocent people, especially women and children. Those measures also constitute a major impediment to the full enjoyment of the right to development by a sovereign State and its people. Such a policy is also not in line with the spirit of global partnership for development, as set out in the Millennium Declaration, the Monterrey Consensus and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

Indonesia therefore urges an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba and calls on all countries to adhere to the principles of equality, mutual respect, good-neighbourliness and respect for human rights.

Mr. Rezvanian (Islamic Republic of Iran): My delegation voted in favour of resolution 62/3, just adopted by the General Assembly, on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba. While endorsing the statements made by the representatives of Egypt and Pakistan on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 and China, respectively, I would like to make the following remarks in explanation of our vote on the said resolution.

The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran believes that the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba runs counter to the principles of international law governing relations among States and contradicts the letter and spirit of the Charter of the United Nations, which calls for promoting solidarity, cooperation and friendly relations among nations. Such measures have adverse impacts on the living conditions and human rights of the Cuban people and will hamper the efforts of the Cuban Government to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, including the Goals of eradicating poverty and promoting health and education, which are indispensable means of economic and social development.

The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation calls upon States to "refrain from... any unilateral measure... that impedes the full achievement of economic and social development by the population of the affected countries, in particular women and children" (*A/CONF.199/20, annex, para. 102*). The same paragraph further indicates that such unilateral measures hinder the well-being of the affected people and create "obstacles to the full enjoyment of their human rights, including the right of everyone to a standard of living adequate for their health and well-being and their right to food, medical care and the necessary social services".

Paragraph 101 of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation stipulates that "States should cooperate to promote a supportive and open international economic system that would lead to economic growth and sustainable development in all countries". It adds that trade policy measures for environmental purposes should not constitute a means of arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination in international trade.

The adoption of the said resolution is indicative of the strong objection of the international community to unilateral economic coercive measures in general and the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba in particular.

The Islamic Republic of Iran shares fully the concern of the international community on the imposition of unilateral measures with extraterritorial applications. In that regard, it sympathizes with the Cuban Government and people and therefore emphasizes the urgent need to put an end to such measures and for the full implementation of the resolution that the General Assembly adopted today.

Mr. Khammanichanh (Lao People's Democratic Republic): Over the past four decades, the innocent people of Cuba have continued to endure the miseries resulting from the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America upon their country.

It is disappointing to witness such lingering unilateral and discriminatory commercial practices in today's world of interdependence and multilateral cooperation among States. Moreover, the implementation of extraterritorial or unilateral coercive measures is a direct violation of the objectives and principles of the United Nations Charter and international law, as well as of the freedom of trade and navigation.

In accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, a Member State must neither promulgate nor enforce any law, regulation or measure whose extraterritorial effects jeopardize the sovereignty of another Member State, since every nation has the sovereign right to participate freely in the international financial and commercial systems.

On the basis of the universal principle of sovereign equality under the United Nations Charter and international law, no nation has the right to interfere in the internal affairs of another, despite any differences in their socio-political systems. As a sovereign and independent nation, the Republic of Cuba has the right to choose its own political system and the path of development that best suits its specific conditions.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic joins the majority of United Nations Member States in reaffirming the urgent need to put an end to the economic, financial and commercial embargo against Cuba. That long-standing blockade has already caused the Cuban people immeasurable material losses and economic damage. As Members of the United Nations, we should do everything we can to help Cuba to fully reclaim its legitimate right to integrate into the globalized economy. In that spirit, our delegation voted in favour of draft resolution A/62/L.1.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Permit me at the outset to express my country's support for the statements made by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations affirm every country's right to exercise its sovereignty on its own territory and to non-interference in its internal affairs. Thousands of resolutions adopted by the United Nations since its founding in 1945 have reaffirmed the sanctity of those principles and purposes.

The Organization's host country, the United States of America, after having itself bitterly suffered from others' interference in its internal affairs and infringement of its sovereignty before and during the Second World War, played an active and essential role in the formulation of the Charter's text. That fact would make one expect the United States to respect the Charter, which serves as the Organization's constitution and its first and last point of reference. However, because the unilateral embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba and the new measures taken to reinforce it are completely inconsistent with the Charter and international law — which are based on the principles of the sovereign equality of States, non-interference in others' internal affairs and freedom of international trade and navigation — those measures are illegal and are completely incompatible with the

norms of international relations and constitute an unprecedented challenge to international law.

Cuba has suffered from the blockade for more than 47 years. That is a precedent that we decisively reject, together with any other kind of unilaterally imposed extraterritorial and extrajudicial action by one State against another. The Cuban people, particularly children and the elderly, have suffered economically, socially and politically from the embargo, which is having a pernicious effect on their efforts to achieve prosperity and well-being.

My delegation expresses its appreciation of the fact that Cuba continues to attempt to engage in constructive dialogue with the United States to settle all these controversial issues on the basis of the principles of equal sovereignty, mutual respect, non-interference in other States' internal affairs and respect for the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter and the principle of good-neighbourliness. My delegation believes that the two countries should have normal relations that would serve the interests of their peoples. In that connection, we should like to reaffirm the right of all peoples to choose their own economic, political, social and cultural systems of their own free will and in conformity with the norms of international law.

The fact that 183 States supported this resolution last year and 184 this year shows that a resounding majority of States want an end to the embargo against Cuba and reaffirm the need to respect the national systems chosen by each country in perfect freedom and in accordance with its own national interests.

The international community has reiterated several times its rejection of all unilateral sanctions imposed against Cuba, including the so-called Helms-Burton Act, promulgated by the Government of the United States. That law exceeds the national jurisdiction of the United States and affects the sovereignty of other States that have relations with Cuba, which is incompatible with the principle of the sovereign equality of States and of international law. Furthermore, Syria condemns the most recent measures against Cuba, announced by the United States of America a few days ago in an attempt to destroy the political, economic and social system chosen by the Cuban people.

Despite the constant appeals of the General Assembly for 16 consecutive years, the Government of the United States of America has yet to take any measures to comply with those requests by the international community. It wilfully and obstinately continues to pursue its wrongful policy, ignoring the international community's legitimate demands. My country hopes that all embargoes and similar measures imposed by the United States against many countries, including Cuba and my country will be lifted. We hope that not only the voice of the international community through the General Assembly, but also those of all other international organizations and agencies will be totally heeded and respected by the United States of America and by its legislative bodies. On the basis of this, Syria voted in favour of the draft resolution.

It was surprising and significant to see that Israel voted against the draft resolution. The draft resolution was carried by an overwhelming majority of votes, and the negative vote by Israel shows in addition that Israel does not view international law as anything of value. The entity concerned is an isolated minority in the international community. Things worsened for Israel when it voted against this draft resolution related to the actions of the United States of America.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote.

Two representatives have requested to speak in exercise of the right of reply. Allow me to remind all members that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mrs. Núñez Mordoche (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of the United States today reiterated the traditional lies fabricated to support, strengthen and universalize the failed and illegal policy of hostility, genocidal embargo and aggression by the empire against Cuba.

The representative of the regime fraudulently installed in Washington, confirmed the frustration, despair and personal hatred that the dubious tenant of the White House, George W. Bush, feels for the Cuban people. In its attempt to overthrow the revolution and impose its imperialist designs on Cuba, the United States Government encourages violence and invokes the use of force against the Cuban nation.

On 24 October, the unpopular and bellicose Mr. Bush announced an unprecedented escalation of

the policy of the Government of the United States against Cuba. He announced more embargos against the Cuban people, more subjection and more and renewed efforts to subdue, through hunger and disease, the unshakeable sovereign will arising from the resistance of thousands of men, women and children.

Never before has the essence of Bush's policy towards our country — that is, reconquering Cuba by force — been so clear. The chicken hawks in Washington are mistaken if they think they can intimidate us. Millions of Cuban women and men will continue to defend, at the price of our own lives, the sacred victories of the Cuban revolution: freedom, dignity, social justice and the sovereignty we fully enjoy.

If, in the escalation of their current economic, political and diplomatic war against Cuba, they make the mistake of launching themselves into a direct military aggression, we can assure them that they must be prepared to confront, in our country, a resistance that will only end when the independence and sovereignty of our people are assured. We are prepared to defend our homeland and socialism. We believe in the truth and justice that are the basis for the vitality of the Cuban revolution. We wish to thank the world for its valuable solidarity with and support to Cuba.

We understand perfectly well the illegal and incorrect interpretation that Mr. Bush and the people in his regime apply to the concepts of freedom and human rights. Only a criminal dictatorship with demented hegemonic pretensions such as that of Bush could bomb innocent civilian populations in the name of freedom and kidnap, imprison and torture defenceless people in the name of human rights and the so-called war against terror.

The Government of the United States is alone in its policy towards Cuba. Today, the almost universal rejection of the genocidal embargo against the people of Cuba has been confirmed. The United States must respect the right of Cubans to their independence and sovereignty. It must immediately cease its policy of aggression and threats against Cuba. It must renounce the failed idea of fabricating a mercenary opposition in Cuba and stop the radio and television war against our country. It must immediately and unconditionally lift the genocidal embargo. It must abandon its policy of encouraging illegal immigration from Cuba. It must release the five Cuban anti-terrorism fighters who are political prisoners in United States prisons and put an end to the impunity that allows Luis Posada Carriles and dozens of other anti-Cuban agents to operate freely in the United States.

If the United States truly were interested in human rights, it would not have established torture chambers in the illegal base at Guantanamo and would have put an end to the bombing of innocent civilians in Iraq.

Those who are accomplices in the anti-Cuban policy of the Bush regime deserve little credit. A Government like that of Australia has no moral authority by which to criticize Cuba. As for the European Union, I must once again note with regret its hypocrisy, bankrupt self-analysis and lack of ability to define an independent policy towards Cuba. The European Union's supposed concern for human rights has no credibility when its members and associated States are encouraging and systematizing racism and xenophobia, discriminating against immigrants, facilitating the illegal and secretive transfer of persons who were kidnapped or arbitrarily detained by the Central Intelligence Agency or Pentagon of the United States and providing secret facilities for the illegal detention and torture of presumed terrorists. What respect can be given to Governments who are hypocritically opposed to an impartial investigation by the former Commission on Human Rights into the atrocities perpetrated in the torture chambers at Guantanamo?

Cuba will not be intimidated, and our unity cannot be broken. Our people only unite further when faced with imperial threats and arrogance. Such acts have not been able to subjugate our people. As our Head of State, Commander-in-Chief Fidel Castro, has said, they will never have Cuba. If necessary, we are ready to confront the imperialist aggressors in the trenches, side-by-side with millions of Cubans.

Mr. Goddard (United States of America): I apologize for taking the floor again, but my delegation is obliged to exercise our right of reply.

The resolution inaccurately blames the United States for the hardships of the Cuban people, while exonerating the Cuban Government's own policies, which deny the rights of the Cuban people to a fair wage for their labour, to own a business or to otherwise exercise their rights in the marketplace.

The resolution also inaccurately claims that the United States embargo is a violation of freedom of navigation, that is, a blockade. In fact, the United States policy of limiting bilateral transactions with the Cuban regime does not prevent the rest of the world from trading with Cuba or providing Cuba with access to food or medicine.

Most seriously, the resolution does not refer to the embargo on freedom that the Cuban regime has imposed on its own people, which even prevents United Nations and other international human rights organizations from travelling to Cuba and meeting freely with the Cuban people.

The Acting President: I now give the floor once again to the representative of Cuba to exercise the right of reply for the second time.

Mr. Amorós Núñez (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Once again, we note that the arguments of the United States are baseless. Obviously, they have not taken into account what happened here today, when 184 countries clearly expressed their opposition to the blockade policy, not for the reasons stated by the United States, but simply because it is an act which is totally contrary to the provisions of the Charter of United Nations and international law.

We do not accept in any way the reasoning given by the United States. We insist that the blockade is the greatest violation of human rights of the Cuban people and that it is the factor preventing us from making further progress in the economic and social development of our people. We therefore do not recognize what has just been said here.

Everything that the delegate of the United States has said is further proof of that country's mendacious policy, which is not endorsed by the international community and is clearly rejected by the United Nations. Nothing is true in what he has stated. We are not going to pursue this any further, we simply wish to indicate that Cuba does not recognize what has been said here. In addition, the vote that took place today is a clear reflection of the international community's opposition to this policy, which, more than anything else, more than just constituting a violation of the human rights of the Cuban people, is a clear indication of the genocidal policy against our people. I am not going to pursue this any further. Once again, we believe that what he has said here is not worthy of any recognition, has no authority and has no chance of being accepted by those present here, particularly by the delegation of Cuba.

The Acting President: Since there are no further representatives who wish to take the floor, may I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 21?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.